

The Automobile Landscape

The following articles feature various perspectives on identifying and preserving important aspects of the automobile's historic impact on our built environment.

First, a photo essay illustrates properties listed in the National Register. Carol Ahlgren's article offers a personal perspective on recognizing the human component to this preservation story, the need for including historic roads in survey efforts to assist State Historic Preservation Offices identify those significant resources that survive, and recent preservation awareness efforts on the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska. W. Dwayne Jone's article chronicles the family history behind the Pig Stand drive-in restaurant chain as it evolved from 1921 to the present.

Jeff Winstel's article describes the current reuse of a 1940s service station building in a historic canal town, a unit of the national park system. And Dennis Montagna's article laments the loss of a modern 1960s service station designed by architect Vincent Kling that no longer fits today's "gas and shop" corporate retailing formula.



The Clarksville Diner, Decorah, IA, was listed as a well-preserved example of a 1939 Silk City diner manufactured by the Paterson Vehicle Company, Paterson, NJ. Photo by Cheryl Tindall.

Beth L. Savage

Road-related Resources Listed in the National Register

Historic transportation corridors and the cultural landscape of the automobile in America have received much attention of late in various venues. The Society for Commercial Archeology, the nation's oldest organization promoting the appreciation and preservation of road-related cultural resources, is approaching 20 years of service. Associated historic properties have been recognized in the National Register of Historic Places program throughout its 30-year history—over 2,200 properties illustrate historic road-related functions. Roads and bridges, tourist cabins and motels, gas stations and garages, shopping centers and restaurants, and tourist attractions and recreational facilities catering to the needs and desires of the automobile traveler reflect this rich, but quickly disappearing, legacy. Here are a few recent examples from around the country.

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Like numerous other contemporary automobile clubs nationwide, the Peoria Automobile Club, Chillicothe, IL, was established in 1911 to improve roads, promote automobile touring, sponsor runs and social events, provide a centrally-located clubhouse for central Illinois, and provide hospitality for visiting motorists. Historic photo of club members in front of clubhouse c. 1918; photographer unknown.

For more information about membership or activities of the Society for Commercial Archeology, please write to SCA
P.O. Box 2324
Atlanta, Georgia 30301-2324
or call 202-882-5424.



In response to the dramatically increased demand for automobile parking in the downtown central business district, the Imperial Garage, Portland, OR, was built in 1923 as the city's first multi-floor parking garage constructed specifically as an automobile parking garage. Photo by John M. Tess, Heritage Investment Corporation.

Camp O'the Pines (now the Log Cabin Motel), Pinedale, WY, was the town's first and only cabin camp constructed in 1929 to serve the growing auto tourism business during the Depression era. Photo by Richard Collier.



Completed in 1921, Florida State Road No. 1, Santa Rosa County, FL, was the first paved highway in West Florida. This six-mile long, 24' wide brick section of the road was planned as part of the Old Spanish Trail from Jacksonville, Florida, to the Pacific Ocean. Ironically, in 1977, bricks removed from a half-mile long section at the eastern end of this original road segment were used to construct a memorial sidewalk commemorating the historic Old Spanish Trail. Photo by Barbara E. Mattick, Bureau of Historic Preservation.



Designed by Rapid City architect James C. Ewing in 1929, the Motor Service Company, Rapid City, SD historically advertised both sales and service of many makes of automobiles. Owned and operated by the Morrison family since its opening, the business is significant within the state's historic context entitled, "The Depression and Rebuilding: New Transportation Facilities and the Impact of the New Automobile." Photo by Christina Slattery, U.S. West Research, Inc.

The Embassy Gulf Service Station, Washington, DC, was designed in a Neo-Classical mode as an example of "artistic" stations intended as miniature civic monuments. Because of its location, this design by architect Pierre L.R. Hogner was subjected to the design review scrutiny of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. Photo by Traceries.



Built around the opening to the cave that shelters the largely underground Crystal River, the imaginative buildings of the 1934 Crystal River Tourist Camp, Cave City, AR, are described as mason Prince Matlock's "Mannerist" interpretation of the organic rustic style of automobile tourist camp. Photo by S. Mitchell, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.